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Police in Africa: the Street Level View by Jan Beek, Mirco Göpfert, Olly Owen and Jonny Steinberg (eds), London: Hurst, 376 pp, £30 (paperback), ISBN 9781849045773.

Beek and colleagues have assembled a crack team of police ethnographers, collectively sitting on a rich seam of data which is mined to great effect in this volume of 15 chapters, divided across 3 sections digging out the what, who and how of police and policing in Africa. Whether intended or by happy coincidence, the book complements another volume published in 2017 which remarks that the last decade has seen a significant development of policing ethnography across the globe, in turn contributing to a renewal of policing studies (Fassin 2017). Beek and colleagues' joint enterprise zooms in on the sub-Saharan region to identify what is specific to the region and to draw out commonalities and diversity finding local nuances in a global model of police and policing. Any one chapter might make an excellent resource for deepening one's understanding on issues in policing in the particular state covered, but as a whole the volume makes a further contribution to police studies that makes it more than the already considerable sum of its parts.

As noted, those parts are spread across three main sub-divisions, each with a central orienting question about police in Africa: what is it? Who are they? And how are they doing their work? In addressing these questions the authors take us into a series of police worlds, defined geographically (Togo, Sierra Leone, South Africa [repeatedly], Nigeria [twice], Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Ghana and Niger); historically (late colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid, contemporary); and by different police formations (high and low forms, traffic police, crime police, gendarmes, special units). We move between station and street, and learn the perspectives, practices and predicaments of the men and women responsible for doing, and for managing, police work.

This review will not deal with each and every one of the excellent chapters, but seeks to give a flavour by engaging with the structure of the book, and within each section, taking a pairing of chapters to exemplify what the volume offers. Each section starts with an overview which helps identify key themes and provide context for what follows. The most extensive of these is Bierschenk's introduction to the section on who the police in Africa are. In walking the reader through multiple dimensions of comparison, Bierschenk arguably provides the reader with a further key to making sense of the book as a whole, beyond the general introduction and it is a good idea to jump straight to this chapter before returning to pick things up with part 1. Firstly, policing is identified as a 'transversal object' or 'travelling organizational model' which is 'copied, altered and transferred' (p 105). This allows for meaningful comparison to enhance our understanding of both contextual drivers shaping the model and the effects of policing in different times and spaces. Bierschenk points to the benefits of comparison across jurisdiction, across different branches of state bureaucracy and across history, all of which are informed by the detailed work of the ethnographers represented in the book.

What?

The question, 'what is the police?' is opened up with another fundamental question, 'why is there police?' (Schlichte, p 19). Three answers are proffered based on scholarship derived predominantly from Europe and North America, each with implications on what the police are: a form of social control required in modern and modernising societies, and so characterised by convergence; a defence of a particular order, in this case modern capitalism and its foundation in property rights, so

predominantly a repressive tool; and an extension of bureaucratic momentum, so shaped according to the self-interest of key state and police actors. Of course, one answer does not exclude another, and Glasman's chapter on Togo locates discourses of professionalization (a term he notes is of limited value, and containing many contradictory visions) in the context of both modernization and bureaucratization. And in answering what the police are, or specifically what they became during the 1940s and 1950s, Glasman's archival and oral historical research takes us to an understanding of who the police are, as recruits and at different levels in the organisation – witnessing the changing values of different forms of capital (here, military experience and formal educational). On other occasions through the book it is notable that in answering the headline question of a given section, the authors are able to, and indeed need to, draw on insights that would be well placed elsewhere in the volume. If anything, this speaks not to an artificial division between sections, rather a strong sense of complementary aims. In terms of what the police become in this period, Glasman's emphasis is on the bureaucratic form and the demands it places on policemen, their skills and how they use their time. It is in this sense that 'professionalization' takes on specific meanings, not uniformly recognised by all of his informants. The final chapter in this section by Lar, one of three authors based in African universities, might at first glance look like a step away from state and bureaucracy in its focus on vigilante police. Yet his archival and interview research in Plateau State, Nigeria locates aspects of vigilantism as an extension of the state and as 'statecraft from below' (p 80). The chapter gives a historical background to the particular form of vigilantism represented by the formally constituted and registered Vigilante Group of Nigeria, and the detail merits a close reading of the chapter as it follows a non-linear set of developments from colonialism, through civil war, to austerity and on to the contemporary period, with competing logics for differing forms of policing conducted at a distance from central authorities. Thus the vigilantism of VGN is conceived of as an extension of the state, with vetting, interviews, registration, uniforms and some training, and active participation in a range of police duties. For the vigilantes, this enhances prestige and legitimacy, and for the state it reinforces a presence in particular localities. This results in a partially bureaucratised organisation, but one which combines formal legal codes with modes of social control rooted in historically informed non-statutory codes.

Who?

There are many ways in which the 'who' question could be answered – who are the police sociologically, in terms of background and identity of recruits? Who are they in the eyes of the policed? Who are they in terms of established models of police? And who do the police think they are? Thurmann's chapter, based on 3 months observation and interviews on a special police unit in Kinshasa deals with a militarised model of police, which in a post-conflict environment may be linked to public perceptions of brutality, combining her observations of behaviour and actions on base, with the police officers' own views. This gives rise to my favourite of the informative, ethnographic vignettes of the book, as the assembled officers are prompted by a senior officer to chant out that the author is 'Madame Laura!', 'Anthropolgist!', there to ask 'Questions!' which the assembled will 'Answer!'. The contrast of the regimented approach to providing data with many of the niceties of social science research (at least as it is proposed and written up in many cases) is stark, but underlines a wider point about militarization, in as much as this maps on to particular models of hierarchy and discipline. Evidently, the capital of military experience remains valued in the police organization (in contrast to Glasman's observations of shifts in late-colonial Togo), and Thurmann notes the continued use of military titles for senior officers, in spite of formal adoption of offices

such as Commissaire. Yet against this, Thurmman finds nuance in how the unit mark themselves off not only from other police, but equally from the military, including restraint with weapons, and the placing of police action on a higher intellectual plane. As one might expect of such a special unit, one finds it can be characterised as both military and police, as either one or the other, or as distinct from both. In a short space, Thurmman's chapter does justice to this, and left me hungry to know what she would have found had she had a position that would let her extend the observations beyond the base to a wider set of police-civilian interactions, as well as possible interactions between the unit and other police or military units.

Faull's chapter on South Africa again shifts into a question of how police work is conducted (in this case with a focus on violence) to explore the section's central question of 'who?' The chapter sets the exploration of 800 hours of observation across four stations in the initial context of the violent death of Mido Macia, dragged hundreds of metres behind a police van and likely beaten in the cell where he was later found dead. Faull focuses on the insult Macia had reportedly directed at one officer, in public, to open up the themes of disrespect and humiliation and, after Gilligan, violence as a response. In this chapter, the police are located within the wider society from which they are drawn, in which violence is normalised as a problem solving tool, evidently expected and endorsed by many calling for police intervention, and where it is valorised in statements from political elites. Combining this with observations on constructions of masculinity, state bureaucracy and black class formation, status expectation and anxiety, Faull weaves together multiple elements in a climate of violence in which the killing of Mido Macia by South African Police Service officers can be contextualized.

How?

The final section works with the idea of police work as craft, involving contingency, improvisation and discretion (Praten, p 193). This takes us 'behind the scenes', rendering the normally invisible yet everyday interactions visible, showing how police operate outside formal legal frameworks to resolve social cases and minor crimes thus enhancing their legitimacy with populations mistrustful of the legal system (Kyed p 213-14). Kyed's detailed description of station 9 in Maputo City, Mozambique, indicates the patience, flexibility and adaptability of officers, while at the same time showing that they could nudge complainants and other parties towards resolution by raising the spectre of a move to a more formal legal register by opening a process. The work also acts as a useful corrective to simplistic notions of corruption differentiating payments at the end of a mutual process of negotiating a resolution from those characterised as bribes intended to interrupt or undermine a formal process. Money changing hands is taken up in Beek's chapter on Ghanaian traffic stops. He employs the idea of 'registration' to understand the variations in police behaviour as they select from different 'registers' to maintain legitimacy and achieve their ends in traffic stops – ends which include supplementing their income and correcting some of the many observable deficiencies with vehicles on the roads. Registers include law, violence, social order, sociability and market and are employed together to different degrees and serve as a useful abstraction which could be employed across various cases to build comparative knowledge.

The excellent collection of papers is bookended by Ian Loader and Alice Hills, who briefly and respectively locate the collection in the context of global policing studies and the wider contribution of African police studies alongside state-building and development studies. Individually, the chapters

represent useful country-specific resources, marked by rich description; well- theorised explorations of policing in diverse countries and organisational contexts; and at their best, broader reflections on police and policing more generally. Taken as a whole, the book opens up an interaction between the detailed case-specific research, and a broader comparative agenda offering an understanding of a general form, 'police', how it manifests in specific times and places, and the effects it has. This makes an excellent addition to contemporary policing literature.

Further references

Fassin, Didier (2017) *Writing the World of Policing: The Difference Ethnography Makes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.